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FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1774

INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 1675

RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 0757

RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 0762

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0496

RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0496

RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0355

RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0402

RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC

RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2170

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000356

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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DEPT FOR DS/DSS/ITA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC AEMR CASC PHUM IN

SUBJECT: INDIAN ARMY DEPLOYS TO QUELL MUSLIM RIOTS IN KOLKATA

REF: A) KOLKATA 0351 B) KOLKATA 0345 C) KOLKATA 0088

¶11. (U) Summary: On November 21, central Kolkata was rocked by violence as Muslim supporters of the All India Minorities Forum (AIMF) and Furfurasharif Muzadeddia Anath Foundation (FMAF) enforced roadblocks in Kolkata to protest the recent Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) attacks in Nandigram and to demand the cancellation of Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen's Indian visa. The violence started when protesters clashed with the police and set fire to passing vehicles in the Park Circus area.

One person was reportedly killed and six army companies were deployed to support the police. Post Emergency Action Committee (EAC) authorized early release of non-essential consulate staff to allow personnel to get home safely and to avoid an anticipated military curfew. Post also issued a Department-cleared Warden message, alerting American Citizens of the violence and recommending that they avoid the affected areas. Post will be closed on November 22 for the Thanksgiving holiday. The recent violence and agitation reflects a growing Muslim perception that CPM policies are anti-Muslim. End Summary.

¶12. (U) Muslim supporters of the AIMF and FMAF began protests in the morning of November 21 in central Kolkata, bringing traffic to a halt on main arterial city roads -- including AJC Bose road, Park Circus, Moulali and CIT Road (approximately a half mile from the Consulate). Demonstrators were demanding the revocation of Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen's Indian visa, claiming her novels were anti-Muslim. Nasreen has been residing in Kolkata for several months. In addition, Muslims were upset over the recent November 6-12 CPM attacks on villagers in the rural West Bengal area of Nandigram as the Muslims say that 70 percent of the Nandigram victims were Muslim (Reftels).

¶13. (U) Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Jawed Shamim and several other policemen were injured when the police tried to lift the blockade on AJC Bose Road. Police resorted to a baton-charge and used teargas to enforce order. The situation spiraled out of control even as special police Rapid Action Force were deployed. One protestor was reportedly killed and 22 vehicles were damaged. Around 1600 hours six army companies were deployed to the disturbed areas. A curfew is to be imposed from 2200 hours today to 0600 hours on November 22 in the affected areas.

¶14. (SBU) Post EAC authorized non-essential consulate staff to leave early to avoid the violence and the anticipated curfew. A warden message alerting American citizens of the violence was cleared by Embassy New Delhi and the Department, and was

released through the Warden network. Post will be closed on November 22 for the Federal Thanksgiving holiday. Post will continue to monitor the situation to assess possible impacts on operations for Friday, November 23.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: This violence reflects rising communal anger in West Bengal among the Muslim community. Local Muslims, normally devoid of communal tensions, are growing upset with the CPM-run state government for several reasons. In September, Muslims became enraged over the mysterious death of young Muslim Rizwanur Rehman, following his marriage to Hindu Priyanka Todi. Press reported extensively that Todi's father solicited the local police to threaten Rehman and many suspect that Rehman may have been murdered. Also in recent weeks, CPM activists attacked villagers in Nandigram and killed, injured and displaced farmers, a large number of whom were Muslims. In addition, the much-publicized Sachar Committee report, released earlier this year, indicated the GOWB has failed to address the Muslim community's economic and social backwardness in the state. Finally, Taslima Nasreen, whose controversial writings against Islamic practices forced her to flee a fatwa of death in Bangladesh, has been residing in Kolkata.

JARDINE